

Nadler Demands Health Care for 9/11 Responders and Office Workers; Criticizes EPA Cleanup Plan

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) joined 9/11 first responders and Manhattan office workers who became sick by the toxic air at Ground Zero to demand health care from the federal government. Along with New York Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Vito Fossella (R-NY) and Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Mr. Nadler spoke to the press about this important issue. He also gave his gallery ticket to President Bush's State of the Union speech tonight to Robert Gulack, one of the victims of post-9/11 environmental damage. Mr. Gulack is a senior attorney at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and an example of a Manhattan office worker who has permanent lung damage because of exposure to contaminated World Trade Center debris in an office building in southern Manhattan.

Mr. Nadler and his Congressional colleagues are demanding the federal government provide health care to 9/11 first responders and Manhattan office workers -- and with the first and only dose of federal funds for 9/11 health treatment running out, they are also calling on President Bush to include regular and ample 9/11 health funding in his budget proposal. In December, Bush Administration officials stated that 9/11 treatment programs that currently receive federal funding may have to be shut down as early as next summer unless they receive another round of federal support.

Following are Mr. Nadler's remarks at today's press conference:

More than five years after the tragedy of September 11 took the lives of more than three thousand Americans, I'm sad to say that the disaster continues to claim victims until this very day. While those who perished on 9-11 were murdered by savage terrorists, the people who are sick and dying today are victims of our own government's negligence and incompetence.

By now, we all know the story of how our government deceived us and told us the air in the World Trade Center area was okay to breathe. They said nothing was wrong. But they were wrong. We know that The Environmental Protection Agency ignored the science in favor of political expediency. And regarding the clean-up of Lower Manhattan, the EPA continues to ignore the recommendations of its own scientific experts.

The agency and this administration are callously turning a blind eye to the victims of 9-11 by offering a flawed, inadequate, scientifically unsound plan to decontaminate the area. Their new plan is not comprehensive and does nothing to protect people from harmful exposure to World Trade Center-related dust and debris -- it is a slap in the face to all who live, work and go to school in Lower Manhattan:

- For one thing, the EPA's programs for testing and clean up have been voluntary, and contain major gaps by excluding offices, workspaces, and schools.

- EPA also identifies the indoor spaces that are contaminated by drawing arbitrary and artificial geographic boundaries, thereby neglecting surrounding areas badly in need of clean-up and shirking its responsibility to test a variety of locations. The boundary of the December 2006 "Test and Clean Program," currently limited to south of Canal and west of Allen and Pike Streets, explicitly violates the recommendation of external audits that recommend expanding the test and clean area to as far north as Houston Street as well as taking into consideration parts of

Brooklyn, Queens and Jersey City.

- And the paltry \$7 million being spent on the cleanup should be an embarrassment for this administration.

New York City needs a comprehensive testing and clean-up program now, one that will protect New Yorkers from the tragic illnesses that we are already seeing in relation to toxic dust from the World Trade Center. And, of course, the federal government must provide health care to those who have become sick; that five years have elapsed and the Bush Administration still has not promised them treatment is disgraceful.

It is essential that EPA and the Bush Administration develop a plan to ensure the safety of the thousands of people who live, work, and attend school in Lower Manhattan, and I will continue to demand that our Federal agencies be held accountable.

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